



City of Phoenix

*Domestic Violence
Fatality Review Team
2007 Report*



History

**On April 18, 2005,
Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano
signed into law
Senate Bill 1071:
A law which supported the
creation of Domestic Violence
Fatality Review Teams.**



History

- ◆ **May, 2006:**
Phoenix City Manager Frank Fairbanks officially appointed members to a City of Phoenix Fatality Review Project Committee
- ◆ **Spring, 2006:**
The Phoenix Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) met for the first time



The Mission of the Team:

To examine domestic violence fatalities in order to better understand the dynamics of such deaths and to make recommendations for system improvements related to domestic violence.



Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

City of Phoenix participants:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ◆ Libby Bissa (chair) | Family Advocacy Center |
| ◆ Chris Parks (co-chair) | Police Victim Services |
| ◆ Connie Chapman | City Prosecutor's Office |
| ◆ JoAnn Del-Colle | Family Advocacy Center |
| ◆ Heidi Gilbert | City Law Department |
| ◆ Kim Humphrey | Police Professional Standards |
| ◆ Sheri Lauritano | City Prosecutor's Office |
| ◆ Chris McBride | Public Defender |
| ◆ Benny Pina | Police Violent Crimes |
| ◆ Kerry Ramella | Fire Community Assistance |
| ◆ Sandra Renteria | Police Family Investigations |
| ◆ Tina Solomon | City Prosecutor's Office |



Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

Review Team Liaisons:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ◆ Alex Alvarez | Northern Arizona University |
| ◆ Marcie Colpas | Phoenix Public Information |
| ◆ Sandra Hunter/
Heidi Gilbert | Phoenix City Law Dept. |
| ◆ Doug Pilcher | Phoenix Municipal Court |
| ◆ Connie Kostelac | Phoenix Police Department
Planning & Research |



Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

Other Agency Participation:

- ◆ **Maricopa Integrated Health Systems**
- ◆ **Sojourner Center, Domestic Violence Shelter**
- ◆ **Maricopa County Attorney's Office**
- ◆ **Value Options**
- ◆ **Batterer's Intervention / Counseling**
- ◆ **Maricopa County Adult Probation Department**
- ◆ **Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
- ◆ **Maricopa County Superior Court**
- ◆ **Faith Community**
- ◆ **Business Representative/
Employers Against Domestic Violence**



Case Reviews

**The Team utilized the definition
of domestic violence from
Arizona Revised Statute 13-3601**



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARIZONA LEGAL DEFINITION

- ◆ The relationship between the victim and the defendant is one of marriage or former or of persons residing or having resided in the same household
- ◆ The victim and the defendant have a child in common



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARIZONA LEGAL DEFINITION

- ◆ The victim or the defendant is pregnant by the other party
- ◆ The victim is related to the defendant or the defendant's spouse by blood or court order as a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother or sister or by marriage as a parent-in-law, grandparent-in-law, step-parent, step-grandparent, step-child, step-grandchild, brother-in-law or sister-in-law



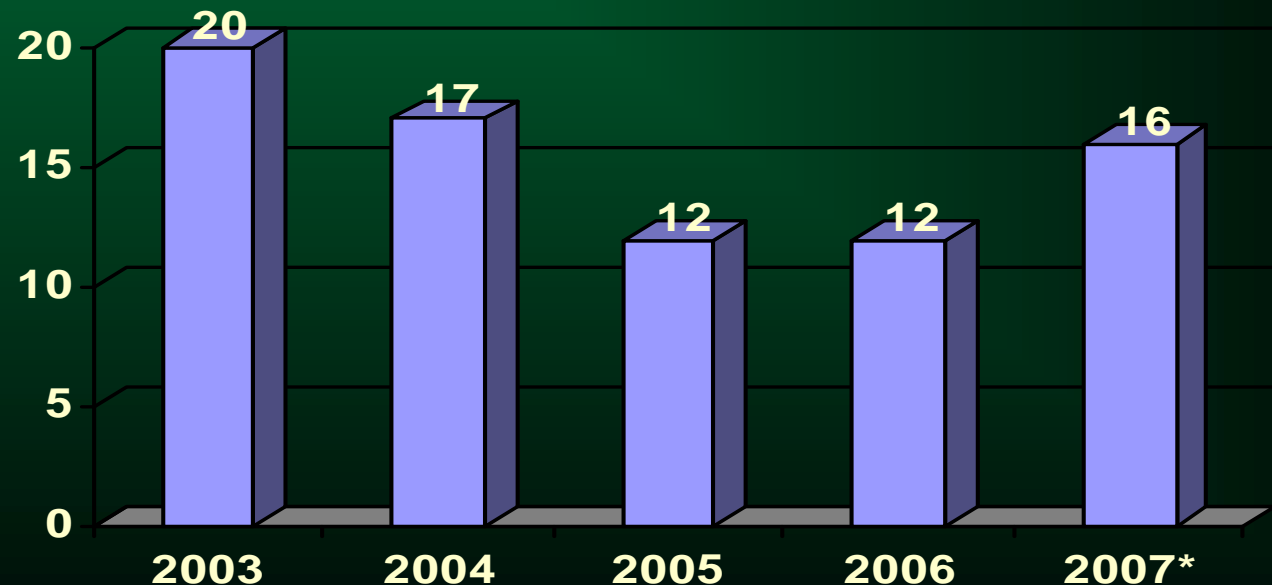
Case Choice Criteria

- ♦ **Significant background information**
- ♦ **Cooperative family members**
- ♦ **Full adjudication**



Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

Phoenix 2003-2007
Domestic Violence Homicides per
Arizona Revised Statute





Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

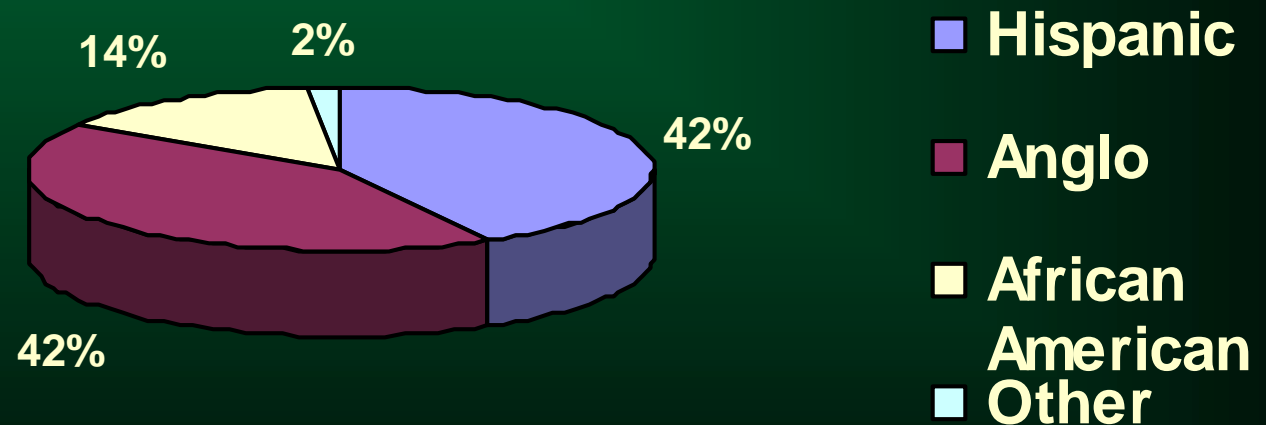
Phoenix 2003-2007
Homicide Victims by gender





Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

Phoenix 2003-2007 Homicide Suspects Ethnicity (self reported)





The Review

The specific case selected for review appeared to cover a number of interesting and important issues and had interaction with multiple systems.

The case involved the shooting death of a woman; killed by her former boyfriend and father of their child.



The Review

Case review team members examined the following information:

- ◆ **Past criminal history of all parties involved**
- ◆ **Prosecution and probation records and related court documents**
- ◆ **Medical records of the victim**
- ◆ **Police records**
- ◆ **Information that is publicly available or provided by the victim's family members, including newspaper articles**



KEY CASE FACTS

- ◆ The victim and offender began a relationship approximately 5 years prior to the homicide
- ◆ The victim had a valid Order of Protection in place at the time of the homicide



KEY CASE FACTS

- ◆ The 40-year older offender had been continuously involved in the criminal justice system since the age of 15
- ◆ Between the ages of 15-17, the offender was arrested for robbery, rape and attempted murder



KEY CASE FACTS

- ◆ As an adult the offender was charged with numerous felonies in 3 states including: forgery, sexual battery, grand larceny, burglary and assault
- ◆ In almost every incident, the case was never formally charged or resulted in a dismissal or acquittal



KEY CASE FACTS

- ◆ At one point, the offender did spend 6 years in prison for sexual assault
- ◆ The victim choose to maintain a connection with the offender in order to encourage a father-child relationship



KEY CASE FACTS

- ◆ The victim did not trust the criminal justice system and so, the victim attempted to handle the offender on her own
- ◆ The homicide took place when the offender returned their child after a week-end visit



What Could We
Have Done
Differently?



Recommendations:

Offender Accountability

- ◆ **Increase communication among misdemeanor and felony prosecution units**
- ◆ **Develop a multi-department / agency Phoenix domestic violence coordination team**
- ◆ **Develop ‘best practices’ protocols for the Threat Management Team**



Recommendations:

Specific System Responses

- ◆ **Increase the use of forensic medical exams**
- ◆ **Develop cross-system communication abilities among prosecutors, advocates, police and probation units**
- ◆ **Hire additional advocates for immediate response**



Additional Recommendations

- ◆ ***VICTIMOLOGY:***

Increase the knowledge and skills of all members of the criminal justice system

- ◆ ***LETHALITY ASSESSMENT:***

Develop improved processes for assessing lethality for domestic violence victims